

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

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AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

CONFIDENTIAL SOFIA 1513

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, OVIP (PRESIDENT FORD), BU

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT OF BULGARIA REQUESTS INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT

FORD

AT HELSINKI

1. ACTING CHIEF OF FOREIGN MINISTRY'S EIGHTH DEPARTMENT (KARAZHOV) ASKED ME TO CALL JULY 23 AND SAID HIS SUPERIORS HAD INSTRUCTED HIM TO REQUEST THAT PRESIDENT ZHIVKOV BE GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO CALL ON PRESIDENT FORD WHEN THEY ARE BOTH IN HELSINKI DURING CSCE THIRD STAGE MEETING. HE SAID US-BULGARIAN RELATIONS HAVE BEEN IMPROVING, THERE HAVE BEEN CERTAIN WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN ZHIVKOV AND THE PRESIDENT, AND THE GOB BELIEVES THAT PERSONAL MEETING WOULD BE CONDUCIVE TO FURTHER PROGRESS. (DEPT WILL RECALL THAT ZHIVKOV HAD INVITED THE PRESIDENT TO VISIT BULGARIA, WHICH WAS POLITELY PARRIED.)

2. I ASKED WHETHER BULGARIANS HAVE IN MIND A MEETING CONFINED TO ESTABLISHMENT OF PERSONAL CONTACT OR WHETHER PRESIDENT ZHIVKOV PROPOSED TO DISCUSS SPECIFICS, AND

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WAS ASSURED THAT ZHIVKOV HAS IN MIND ONLY A BRIEF

MEETING CONFINED TO GENERALITIES. I THEREUPON SAID THAT PRESIDENT FORD'S TIME IN HELSINKI WILL HAVE TO BE VERY TIGHTLY BUDGETED, WITH PRIORITY NO DOUBT GOING TO THOSE MEETINGS WHERE SPECIFIC MATTERS NEED TO BE DISCUSSED, SO THAT IF BY ANY CHANCE THE MEETING DOES NOT EVENTUATE THIS MUST UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES BE CONSTRUED AS DUE TO ANY LACK OF THE PRESIDENT'S DESIRE TO MEET WITH MR. ZHIVKOV, LET ALONE AS A DISCOURTESY. KARAZHOV THEREUPON SAID THE LIMITATION ON THE PRESIDENT'S TIME IS UNDERSTOOD HERE, BUT NOT MUCH TIME IS NECESSARY FOR A SHORT, FRIENDLY MEETING WHOSE ONLY PURPOSE IS TO ESTABLISH PERSONAL CONTACT.

3. RECOMMENDATION: BEARING IN MIND THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL BE PERSONALLY VISITING POLAND, ROMANIA AND YUGOSLAVIA, SPARING FIVE TO TEN MINUTES FOR PRESIDENT ZHIVKOV WOULD SEEM REASONABLE AND DESIRABLE. THERE IS NO NEED FOR ANY SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSION AT THIS TIME. HOWEVER, SEEING ZHIVKOV WOULD BECOME MORE URGENT AND IMPORTANT IF PRESENT PLANS ENVISAGE PRESIDENT FORD SEEING HEAD OF STATE OR OF GOVERNMENT OF EITHER EAST GERMANY, CZECHOSLOVAKIA OR HUNGARY DURING HIS FORTHCOMING TRIP. AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND HUNGARY (BUT NOT BULGARIA) HAVE HAD VISITS FROM A SECRETARY OF STATE IN RECENT YEARS. FURTHER DISCRIMINATION AGAINST BULGARIA WOULD NOT BE UNDERSTOOD HERE. BULGARIA HAS FOR SOME TIME BEEN MAKING EFFORTS TO DEVELOP BETTER RELATIONS WITH US, AND IF WE FAIL TO SHOW RESPONSIVENESS THIS WILL MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT TO PROMOTE OUR INTERESTS HERE.

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